

Appendix table 8-25.

Public assessment of nuclear power, by selected characteristics: 1985–99 (selected years)

Characteristic	1985	1988	1990	1992	1995	1997	1999
Percent							
All adults							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	28	18	24	17	21	22	24
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	22	24	23	30	22	23	24
Benefits equal harmful results	6	11	12	11	14	18	15
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	13	17	13	15	21	17	20
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	31	30	28	27	21	20	17
Male							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	38	23	31	21	29	28	30
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	22	27	24	34	23	26	29
Benefits equal harmful results	4	7	8	7	8	13	7
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	9	15	11	10	21	13	20
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	27	28	26	28	19	20	14
Female							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	19	14	17	14	14	17	18
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	22	21	21	27	21	20	21
Benefits equal harmful results	8	14	16	14	20	22	21
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	16	19	16	18	23	20	21
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	35	32	30	27	22	21	19
Less than high school graduate							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	28	15	21	10	15	20	22
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	24	25	21	37	16	17	21
Benefits equal harmful results	8	17	23	11	25	25	22
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	14	19	13	13	28	21	20
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	26	24	22	29	16	17	15
High school graduate							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	27	18	23	19	21	22	24
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	21	23	23	26	23	23	24
Benefits equal harmful results	6	9	9	11	13	16	13
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	13	17	14	16	21	16	21
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	33	33	31	28	23	23	18
Baccalaureate and higher							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	29	22	32	19	28	25	28
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	21	25	23	34	26	26	29
Benefits equal harmful results	3	7	7	10	8	14	11
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	13	14	13	14	18	17	18
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	3	32	25	23	19	18	14
Attentive public to science and technology^a							
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	35	26	30	24	28	25	26
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	20	24	27	30	24	25	30
Benefits equal harmful results	1	9	6	10	10	11	11
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	12	16	9	9	22	17	18
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	32	25	28	27	18	22	15

See explanatory notes, if any, and SOURCE at end of table.

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Public assessment of nuclear power, by selected characteristics: 1985–99 (selected years)

Characteristic	1985	1988	1990	1992	1995	1997	1999
Sample size							
All adults	2,005	2,041	2,033	997	2,006	2,000	1,882
Male	950	958	964	464	953	930	900
Female	1,054	1,084	1,070	533	1,053	1,070	982
Less than high school graduate	507	530	495	215	418	420	403
High school graduate	1,143	1,158	1,202	579	1,196	1,188	1,111
Baccalaureate and higher	349	353	336	203	392	392	368
Attentive public to science and technology ^a	235	233	229	94	195	288	216

NOTES: In 1985, 1988, 1990, 1995, 1997, and 1999, the question was worded, "In the current debate over the use of nuclear reactors to generate electricity, there is a broad agreement that there are some risks and some benefits associated with nuclear power. In your opinion, have the benefits associated with nuclear power outweighed the harmful results, or have the harmful results associated with nuclear power been greater than its benefits? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results or only slightly? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results or only slightly?" In 1992, the question was worded, "In the current debate over the use of nuclear reactors to generate electricity, there is broad agreement that there are some costs and some benefits associated with nuclear power. In your opinion, are the costs associated with nuclear power greater than the benefits, or are the benefits associated with nuclear power greater than the costs? Would you say that the benefits have substantially exceeded the costs or only slightly exceeded the costs? Would you say that the costs substantially exceeded the benefits or only slightly exceeded the benefits?" Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

^aTo be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is "very interested" in that issue area, report that he or she is "very well informed" about it; and be a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Citizens who report that they are "very interested" in an issue area, but who do not think that they are "very well informed" about it, are classified as the "interested public." All other individuals are classified as members of the "residual public" for that issue area. The attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of those issues but who is a member of the interested public for at least one of those issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology.

SOURCES: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resource Studies (NSF/SRS), *NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, 1999* (and earlier years). For a complete set of data from the survey, see J.D. Miller and L. Kimmel, *Public Attitudes Toward Science and Technology, 1979–1999, Integrated Codebook* (Chicago: International Center for the Advancement of Scientific Literacy, Chicago Academy of Sciences, 1999); and unpublished tabulations.

See figure 8-11 in Volume 1.